

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 01449 231536Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 SSM-03 AID-05 /086 W
-----089151 240048Z /63

R 231503Z MAY 78
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 995
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE JERUSALEM 1449

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PBOR, IS, JO
SUBJ: FREIJ CALLS FOR INQUIRY INTO GOI POLICY ON ABSENTEE
PROPERTY

REF: JERUSALEM 1418 (NOTAL)

1. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 23, BETHLEHEM MAYOR ELIAS FREIJ
CALLED UPON DEFMIN WEIZMAN TO CONDUCT INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED
CHANGES IN GOI POLICY TOWARDS ABSENTEE PROPERTY.

2. FREIJ TOLD NEWSMEN HE HAD BEEN INFORMED ON APRIL 12 BY
CUSTODIAN OF ABSENTEE PROPERTY IN BETHLEHEM THAT HE (THE
CUSTODIAN) HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED NOT TO ACCEPT POWERS OF ATTORNEY
ON BEHALF OF PROPERTY OWNERS LIVING ABROAD AND NOT TO APPROVE
PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING SUCH INDIVIDUALS. (IN EFFECT,
TO CONSIDER THEIR PROPERTY ABANDONED.)

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PAGE 02 JERUSA 01449 231536Z

3. FREIJ ESTIMATED THAT 70 TO 80 PERCENT OF PROPERTY IN THE
BETHLEHEM AREA BELONGED TO PERSONS LIVING IN SOUTH AND
CENTRAL AMERICA. HE SAID THE MEASURES WOULD DRASTICALLY
AFFECT BUILDING CONSTRUCTION THUS ENCOURAGING EMIGRATION AND
PREJUDICING ANY PROSPECTS FOR A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND OR STATE.

4. FREIJ SAID HIS EARLIER WRITTEN APPEAL TO WEIZMAN HAD NOT BEEN ANSWERED.

5. AL QUDS MAY 23 BANNERS DISPUTE: "MEASURES OF CUSTODIAN OF ABSENTEE PROPERTY CONFIRMED, INSTRUCTIONS RESTRICT SALE OF LAND IN WEST BANK AND JERUSALEM, GENERAL CONCERN AND CONTACTS AMONG ARABS TO DISCUSS A RESPONSE TO THE DANGEROUS SITUATION."

6. IN ITS STORY, AL QUDS CITES HA'ARETZ' LITANI THAT RELIABLE SOURCES IN THE ISRAELI LAND ADMINISTRATION OFFICE OF THE MILGOV HAVE CONFIRMED THAT A NEW INTERPRETATION OF MILITARY ORDER 58 (SEE REFTTEL) HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN. ACCORDING TO HA'ARETZ 250,000 DUNUMS AND MANY RESIDENCES AND COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS WILL BE AFFECTED.

7. COMMENT: FREIJ'S ESTIMATE THAT UP TO 80 PER CENT OF BETHLEHEM'S PROPERTY WILL BE AFFECTED BY ALLEGED CHANGES IN ABSENTEE LAWS STRIKES US AS HIGH. HOWEVER, CHRISTIAN ARABS FROM BETHLEHEM, JERUSALEM AND RAMALLAH AREAS WOULD BE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED SINCE THEY HAVE TENDED TO EMIGRATE TO WESTERN COUNTRIES, RESIDENTS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN HITHERTO UNAFFECTED BY ABSENTEE PENALTIES. RAMALLAH LAWYER AZIZ SHIHEDEH, WHO HOLDS POWERS OF ATTORNEY FOR MANY CLINETS LIVING ABROAD, ESTIMATED THAT BETWEEN 30 AND 40 PER CENT OF PROPERTY IN BETHLEHEM AND RAMALLAH MIGHT BE AFFECTED. AT THIS STAGE, NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE, NOT EVEN THE ISRAELIS.
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PAGE 03 JERUSA 01449 231536Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Draft Date: 23 may 1978
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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